



# **Observation & Assessment**

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**Creating Objective, Quality Documentation for  
Child Assessment**

# Why Should We Conduct Observations?

## Observing children allows us to....

- Get to know children's strengths, needs, and abilities
- Understand the learning style, temperament, and personality of each child
- Ensure that our teaching strategies are effective and support learning goals for all children
- Plan a child-centered, responsive learning environment
- Communicate with families about how their children are developing, AND to develop shared goals about their children's learning



# Decisions About Observing

## Being Prepared and Planning Ahead

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### ***What should I observe?***

- What am I looking for? What do I want to know about this child?
- What areas of development am I focusing on, and why?

### ***When should I observe?***

- Are there certain routines or times of day to observe a child?

### ***How should I observe?***

- Should I do a formal or an informal observation?

### ***Why should I observe?***

- What do I need to know about a child?
- What do I want to learn about a child?

# Types of Observation

How Do We Capture Data?

- **Work Samples**
- **Photos**
- **Videos**
- **Language Samples**
- **Anecdotal Observations**



# Writing an Observation

## Objective Versus Subjective Observations

### INCLUDE:

- Descriptions of facial expressions
- Descriptions of physical gestures & actions
- Quotations
- Descriptions of things built/ made



### AVOID:

- Opinions
- Judgments
- Labels
- Assumptions



# Subjective words to avoid when writing an observation

- just because
- but
- always
- never
- can't
- I think
- happy/ angry/ sad
- smart/ helpful /pretty
- likes/ loves/ hates



# Recognizing Our Biases

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*So as not to lose our objectivity, it is important to keep an open heart, an open mind, and a clear lens.*

*Rather than letting a child's behavior trigger you, look beyond their behavior, look beyond your bias.*

*Focus on collecting objective observation evidence and use that data to reflect on what might be causing that behavior. Consider ways that you can support the child through redirection, modeling, scaffolding or positive reinforcements.*

*As intentional teachers, one of our primary roles is to empower children, and to build meaningful relationships by creating warm, caring environments (Epstein, 2007).*

-- Gina Peterson and Emily Elam, College of the Canyons

# Practice Exercise: Objective or Subjective?

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- Alyssa walked up to Jaleah and screamed because she wanted the doll that Jaleah was holding.
- Ryan was riding a tricycle. He rode too close to Martine and rudely yelled "Move!" when he rode by. Martine had a meltdown and started to cry.
- Megan sat on the floor in the book corner, looking at "The Very Hungry Caterpillar". Kara walked up to her and asked, "What are you reading?" Megan looked up at Kara and did not say anything. She continued to look at her book. Kara then chose another book from the shelf and sat next to Megan.



# Practice Exercise: Objective or Subjective?

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- Angelica stood at the easel. She held the paint brush in her left hand, dipping it into the orange paint and moving it up and down several times. Then she dipped her paint brush in the blue paint and made three circles with the paint over the orange lines. Angelica looked at the painting, then looked at me, smiled, and said, "I painting!"
- Derek entered the classroom at drop-off time. His eyebrows were scrunched together and his arms were folded across his chest. When Adam said, "Hi, Derek!", Derek said, "No!" and went to the block area. Derek sat on the floor with his arms folded across his chest.
- Belinda is always happy and smiling. She loves to play with baby dolls.

**Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (ECKLC), Child Screening & Assessment Page:** <https://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/child-screening-assessment>

**Child Care Technical Assistance Network: Observation, Documentation, and Reflection:** <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/infant-toddler-resource-guide/observation-documentation-and-reflection>

**Observation & Assessment In Early Childhood (PDF):**

<https://ccconlineed.instructure.com/courses/4543/files/372045/download?verifier=cJj7T9uLswcy0WfaErpFo7pwDjcOkIWjJmjBxi9f&wrap=1>

# • Questions?

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